

PART 723 - 5: COMMUNICATIONS

This part of the plan discusses two aspects of communications in a water emergency: (1) public information generally and (2) technical means of communication.

5-1 MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Maintaining good public information during a crisis is an important factor in obtaining public cooperation and keeping a crisis situation under control. It is dependent not only on prompt communication from an authority figure who is able to provide concise and factual information to the public, but also on a spirit of cooperation and willingness of media to refrain from sensationalizing information or prematurely releasing incomplete or unsubstantial information as fact.

It is important that one person, assigned as the state public information officer, be fully cognizant of all aspects of the crisis so that no questions are left unanswered. Assigning one person as spokesperson also directs the media to an individual who makes official news announcements, thereby limiting speculation, confusion, or false statements.

News information can be divided into two categories: that provided to the media at large by the public information officer, and that required by federal law as public notice to inform consumers of any existing or potential adverse health effects related to their drinking water and of the steps they can take to minimize the impact. All public water systems must notify the public when the system violates RIDOH drinking water standards. The form and timing of the public notification depends on the type of violation or action and whether the public water system is a community or non-community system. Figure 723-5(1) provides an overview of the notification necessary for community and non- community systems and violations.

In general, community water systems must provide notice in a newspaper. For acute violations, they must provide notice to the local radio or TV stations and to all new billing units. Non-community water systems will generally be required to give the notice by continuous posting. All public water systems are required to use mandatory health effects language for certain types of violations. For those violations requiring public notice by law, the Department of Health assists by sending written notification containing the exact language required.

Distributing public information during a crisis is best facilitated by having prepared announcements before the need arises, which communicate the extent of the crisis and request citizen actions. Consumer conservation may be a supplier's only chance to maintain an adequate supply for a longer term, and communicating the need is essential for cooperation. Effective, accurate, and prompt communication between state agencies, suppliers and the public during emergencies is critical to successful resolution of the incident.

5-2 COMMUNICATIONS AND WARNING SYSTEMS

Communication disruptions may occur during natural and technological disasters. Telephone service may be overloaded or damaged, and radio systems may be necessary for direction and recovery operations. In addition to local systems, the state maintains wireless communication networks, radio systems, and warning systems that provide reliable point-to-point and public communications in emergencies.

The State of Rhode Island has designated RIEMA located at the Command Readiness Center 645 New London Avenue as the Emergency Operations Center during emergencies or in times of disaster. The State EOC is available for coordination for any disaster or emergency.

5-2-1 Civil Defense State Radio System

The CDSTARS radio system is a wireless two-way radio network that interfaces all stations into a common communications configuration. This is one method of communication that is available through RIEMA. Table 723-5(1) lists the location of CDSTARS.

5-2-2 Emergency Alert System

The Emergency Alert System is used to transmit to all licensed radio and television stations including cable 90 second announcements of a general or specific emergency. It can be activated by the National Weather Service to announce imminent weather emergencies.

RIEMA can activate the system to warn residence of other types of emergencies and give information related to the emergency.

5-2-3 Rhode Island Law Enforcement Telecommunication System

The Rhode Island Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (RILETS) is the state warning system that provides a direct link between the state warning point, state police headquarters, political subdivisions, and other key points. The system is used on a daily basis for law enforcement telecommunications matters but also serves as a written word telecommunications system between the state and local governments.

This system has been used to pass word of emergency declarations by the Governor and essential emergency notification to heads of local governments via police dispatch centers. The National Weather Service in Warwick is connected to the system so that emergency weather warnings are transmitted over this system statewide.

Table 723-5 (1) Civil Defense State Radio System (CDSTARS)									
Community	Facility						Agency		
	EOC	PD	FD	TH	PW	OT			
BARRINGTON				S			MHRH Security		Cranston
Bristol	S	R					Zambarano Hospital		Burrville
BURRILLVILLE					S		RI Dept Public Utilities		Warwick
CENTRAL FALLS	S		R				RI DOT Maintenance		NIS
Charlestown		S					RI DEM Enforcement		Prov
Coventry			S				RI Health Dept		Prov
CRANSTON		S					E-911		N Prov
CUMBERLAND		R				S	WSBE-TV (TV-EBS)		Prov
EAST GREENWICH	S						University of RI		Kingston
EAST PROVIDENCE		S	S				Airport Corporation		TF Green
Exeter						S	American Red Cross		Prov
Foster		S					Salvation Army		Prov
GLOCESTER		NIS					RI Civil Air Patrol		TF Green
Hopkinton					S		Air National Guard		Quonset
Jamestown			S				Coast Guard MSO		Prov
Johnston			S				Naval Station Newport		Newport
Lincoln		S					RI State Police Headquarters		Scituate
Little Compton		R	S			S			
MIDDLETOWN			S				Utilities		
NARRAGANSETT			S				Verizon		
Newport			S				Providence Gas		
New Shoreham		NIS					Narragansett Electric		
North Kingstown	S	R					Valley Gas		
NORTH PROVIDENCE	S		R				RIPTA (Bus Service)		
North Smithfield	S	R							
PAWTUCKET						S			
PORTSMOUTH				S					
PROVIDENCE						S			
Richmond							Group	#	
Scituate					S		Community	39	
SMITHFIELD	S						Agencies	17	
South Kingstown		S					Utilities	5	
Tiverton		S					Total	61	
Warren			S				Keys		
WARWICK					S		S = Station	R = Remote	
West Greenwich				S			EOC = Emergency Operating Center		
WEST WARWICK	S	R					PD = Police	FD = Fire	
WESTERLY	S	R					TH = Town Hall	PW = Public Works	
WOONSOCKET		S					OT = Other	NIS = Not Installed	

Notes on CDSTARS network:

Each station operates on a simplex VHF channel and can communicate with RIEMA. Each station can also communicate to those stations nearby and/or between the station and RIEMA.

Because there are no repeaters or central infrastructure there is no single point of failure. Any failure only affects that station. RIEMA has two completely separate stations online at all times and the capability to add/replace stations immediately.

The exact physical location is decided by the community/agency emergency management director and approved by RIEMA. The guidance states that the radio will be near where the community/agency will conduct their emergency operations from, and that the remote (if provided) can be installed at a more convenient location for daily use. This is why the location in each community varies among the local agencies.

Each community/agency is allowed only one station – even if they have multiple operating locations. With 60+ stations the network already is much too large for a simplex network.

The Narragansett Indian Tribe will be a new station on CDSTARS shortly.

There are at least three agencies that were on CDSTARS that should be on the system:

- FEMA Region One Federal Regional Center – Maynard MA. Our connection to the federal government.
- National Weather Service – Taunton MA. We had two links – public link and a private link.
- Block Island State Airport. Provided a second station on the island and a state operated station.

The system is tested every Tuesday at 9:00 am. The system is only used in emergencies when other forms of communications are not available.